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ALBERTA Street News

VOLUME 13 ISSUE 1 JANUARY, 2016

HAPPY NEW YEAR

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Former constable Elvin Toy's dismissal from EPS - pages 3, 4, and 5
Hand sculpture on site of former York Hotel- page 8

Make the New Year a time for sharing

By Linda Dumont

As we go into the New Year 2016, I am anticipating a great year for Alberta Street News. Our January issue is a bit smaller because some of the writers took a break over the Christmas season, but we will be back to 24 pages for February. Sales have been gradually picking up, and we have a few new vendors and writers on board. This year, for the International Vendor Appreciation Week February 2 to 8, we are planning a pizza party at the library downtown. As always, we decide what to do first, then figure out how to get it done. We need donations to make it possible. If you would like to donate, send a donation to me marked for vendor appreciation day.

I live in an area of the city where I am surrounded by people in need, and many of our vendors are surviving on low incomes or no income other than paper sales. If you have gently used clothing or blankets that you would like to donate, they can be dropped off on the steps of my house at 9533-106A Avenue, call 780-428-0805, or left with Angelique by the back door where she sells papers at the Strathcona Farmers' Market on Saturdays. We will also accept non perishable food items, personal care items and gifts to give out on vendor appreciation day. Those Christmas gifts that you will never use may be just what someone else needs! Any donations I cannot distribute myself will be given to the House of Refuge Mission that gives out food and clothing on the parking pad of Edmonton Cash Register every evening at 6 p.m.

In this issue our lead story is the dismissal of former constable Elvin Toy from the Edmonton City Police (story on pages 3, 4, and 5). Allan Sheppard gives a history of Toy's career, and Tom Engel shares some relevant points from the penalty hearing.

I hear many stories from the vendors and others on the street about the generosity they have experienced, often from strangers. Vendor Bill Cunnigham came over to pick up papers wearing new snow pants. One of his customers took him into Army and Navy Department Store and bought them for him because he looked cold standing otuside with the paper.

Shattered Rainbows

By Linda Dumont

My life's not been lived in pastel shades
But the crimson of blood and the black of despair
And the irridescent prisms of shattered rainbows everywhere.
Brilliant beams of pure white light
Pierce the darkest storm tossed night,
While mysterious mist enshrouded forest depth
With diamond waters flash,
And the shimmering brilliance of a single tear
Is a crystal orb speared by one dark lash.
There is hope, an aurora glow
Rimmed by fear and tortuous thought
With faith overlaid like a web of gold -
Radiance seen where darkness has brought
Regret and self doubt, twin carrion birds
That wheel and circle above
The whole is made possible only because
Of the transforming power of love.

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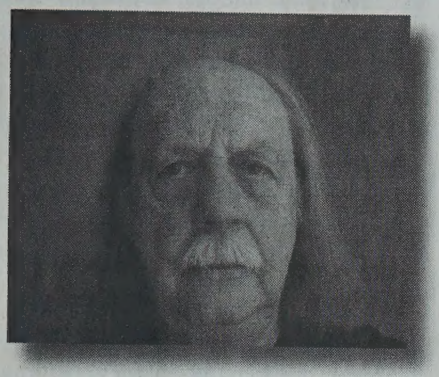
All's fear in love and war—and law enforcement



All's fear in love and war—and law enforcement

Street justice diminishes policing—and us too.

A friend once told me about her fears for her son, who had joined the Edmonton Police Service. He had shared with her the fears he—and likely many, if not all, of his colleagues—felt during gang- and drug-related raids or when engaging someone on certain streets.

There are ordinary jobs (in heavy construction, farm labour, the oil patch) that are probably more dangerous than police work, in terms of number of deaths or disabling injuries per thousand hours worked, or however such things are measured. The routine of the job (endless paperwork, the hurry-up-and-wait nature of court duty) must be boring, not dangerous.

But the routine and boredom of police work can be punctuated by disasters and aggression or violence—against police themselves or against civilians who depend on police to protect, defend, and rescue them. The inherent randomness and inevitability of such events is compounded during times, such as those we now experience, when security agencies and officials, media, political leaders and would-be leaders warn against rampant terrorism and point to every bush, nook, cranny, and dark alley as a hiding place for terrorists or gangbangers and every backpack, instrument case, or unattended bag or box as a possible bomb or worse.

An understandable fear of having to kill someone in the line of duty must also be stressful.

Some police understandably maintain a certain distance in relationships and have, or accept, few opportunities for professional support.

Not an easy job, police work.

But...

There is at least one other side to the story: Just as police can sometimes feel fearful at work, so too can citizens feel and act out fears in encounters with police.

Fear leads to suffering

That's not a good thing, either way. Yoda, the enigmatic philosopher of Star Wars movies said it well: "Fear is the path to the dark side. Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering." Fear is an accelerant, and it can be reciprocal. Mutually fearful actions and reactions can escalate seemingly innocent encounters to violence, even death. Sadly, fear-induced violence and death are more often visited on civilians than police (though that happens too and is no more desirable or acceptable).

It takes self-control to resist acting and reacting provocatively in tense situations. Ideally, both sides should be responsible for avoiding or stopping any interactions that might escalate to violence. Practically, the onus is on police; after all, they are (or should be) recruited, trained, managed, deployed, disciplined and rewarded with that principle in mind as a prime directive.

In my experience, most police do that work well. But I do not belong to a profile group that typically arouses police attention or suspicion. For other less innocuous profiles and with some police, encounters can be more volatile.

(I know there are well-meaning experts who suggest that the mere fact police carry weapons should deter civilians from over-reacting; but that overlooks the fact that weaponry and tactics that rely inappropriately on the use or possession of weapons can provoke, as well as deter.)

Fear may influence street justice

Street justice should not be part of a police toolkit. Yet we know it exists. And we know it is used most often against citizens who are alienated, marginalized, and weak for a variety of reasons, sometimes but not always of their own choice or doing: poverty, homelessness, addictions, mental illness, disability, gender issues, race, ethnicity, youth, even luck—simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time—among many reasons (or non-reasons).

I was led to these musings and observations by early-December reports that former EPS Const. Elvin Toy had been dismissed from the force after 22½ years of service. While he ruled that Toy's dismissal was appropriate and necessary in the circumstances, Supt. Thomas Grue, the presiding officer at Toy's disciplinary hearing, described the result as "tragic" in his report to Tom Engel, the lawyer whose complaint led to Toy's dismissal.

Inner-city residents and Alberta Street News staff with long memories reacted less generously to the news.

A troubling reputation

Toy's interactions with inner-city residents began in the late 1990s, when he helped shut down substandard housing—a laudable city government project that may unintentionally have helped increase Edmonton's homeless population, because promised affordable replacement housing did not materialize.

In the early 2000s Toy joined a four-man downtown-division squad that patrolled the inner city, under Sgt. Dave Pelech. Two members were disciplined for a racist e-mail, and the squad gained a reputation for alleged excessive aggression and violence toward street people, especially women and Aboriginals, with Toy often the focus of concern.

In March 2005, Toy was suspended with pay pending resolution of four assaults and other charges. The stakes were raised in September 2006, when Toy was charged and suspended without pay for allegedly assaulting and beating homeless people.

After almost a year, all charges were dropped and Toy returned to work.

Code of silence

In June 2005, while Toy was on suspension, he and his squad colleagues appeared at public functions wearing T-shirts (provided by Sgt. Pelech) imprinted with the number 440 surrounded by a red

Continued on page 4

All's fear in love and war - and law enforcement - contnued from page 3

circle with a diagonal slash through the centre. 440 is police code for a rat. Readily understood as "No rats," the symbol was interpreted as a warning, not to "rat out" fellow officers: not to cross the "blue line" and report or testify against colleagues.

The incidents provoked a 2009 hearing before the Law Enforcement Review Board. During a break in the hearing, witnesses saw Toy reading notes belonging to lawyer Tom Engel. A complaint from Engel led to a hearing in 2012. At that hearing and in a written statement, Toy denied reading Engel's notes.

Toy was found guilty of discreditable conduct for looking at the notes and two charges of deceit for denying it. Chief Rod Knecht demanded Toy's dismissal on the deceit charges, leading to a disciplinary hearing and finally Toy's dismissal: Toy's credibility as a witness, an unavoidable duty for all police officers on cases they investigate, was damaged beyond repair by the deceit convictions.

Toy not alone

It's tempting to wax self-righteous against Const. Toy and his misadventures. He seems to have authored his own misfortune, certainly on the deceit charges. But was he any more aggressive and violent than other members of the squad led by Sgt. Pelech? Or was he more easily recognized and remembered because of his Chinese-Canadian identity? He was not the only squad member ever to be disciplined.

Nor was Toy the only EPS officer to face possible career-ending charges. Deceit is a serious offence; but is it any more serious than repeatedly tasering a passed-out Aboriginal youth, or assaulting a passer-by on crutches, as Const. Mike Wasylyshen did when (coincidentally or not) his father was chief of the EPS? The second assault occurred when Wasylyshen was drunk and off duty; but what does his behaviour in these and other reported instances say about his judgment—or his vulnerability to fear-induced anger (or anger-induced fear) and his ability to control such impulses?

Wasylyshen also has credibility issues that could compromise his testimony in court, according to lawyer Engel: a provincial court judge found he once "wilfully deceived" a justice of the peace to get a warrant (Edmonton police officer Mike Wasylyshen promoted despite criminal record, Edmonton Journal, December 04, 2014). Why was he never significantly disciplined for his offences? Why was he recently promoted to sergeant, in spite of his spotty record? Does it speak well of the EPS, that there were no other candidates as or more qualified and deserving as he?

Which brings me back to the theme I offered at the beginning: the potentially corrosive consequences of fear.

Taking cynical advantage?

According to an article in the Edmonton Journal (No charges, November 2, 2002), University of Alberta law professor Steve Penney said, "it is 'excessively difficult' to get convictions against police officers because judges and juries appreciate the difficulties they face on the street." The code of silence against ratting out other officers can only make the task harder, if not (the fate of Const. Toy being a rare exception) impossible. It may even amount to taking cynical and self-interested advantage of the goodwill so generally and generously available to police in recognition of the dangers they sometimes face and the integrity most of them display.

That code of silence is substantially based in and driven by fear: fear and an undeniable need to trust that fellow officers will always have one's back in dangerous situations; fear and an unwillingness to trust fellow officers—"rats"—who do not respect and uphold the code.

The goal of the code is admirable: all for one and one for all. But if acting on it involves overlooking, failing to report, committing, or condoning behaviour that every officer knows is wrong, what effect might that have on the morale and ultimately the trustworthiness of our police and our willingness to engage them without fear?

A challenge for the chief

Chief Knecht, appointed in 2011, has promised to protect whistleblowers. Some of the media coverage I read for this essay (listed below), suggests there might be good reason for the chief to clean house and equally good reason to worry about the difficulty of that job. A major root of the problem is the code of silence and the culture of fear that promotes and sustains it. Any viable solution must begin with leadership, ultimately with Chief Knecht.

I wish him well. So should we all.

We do not need—nor do we need to protect—fearful and armed rogues and vigilantes in uniform on our streets.

—

[Media sources consulted: Edmonton police officer dismissed over deceit charges, Edmonton Journal, Dec 03, 2015; Const. Elvin Toy dismissed from Edmonton police force, CBC News, Dec 03, 2015; Former Edmonton cop Derek Huff blows whistle on brutality, corruption, CBC News, Sep 27, 2013; New promotion policy for Edmonton police, Edmonton Sun, Sep 17, 2015; Campaign targeted cop, panel told, Edmonton Journal, Apr 17, 2009; Police officer to face disciplinary hearing over Taser use, CBC News, Aug 13, 2009; Officer claims she was target of bullying and hazing, CBC News, Dec 19, 2009; No hearing for 'no rats' officers, Edmonton Journal, May 15, 2009; No charges, Edmonton Journal, Nov 2, 2006]

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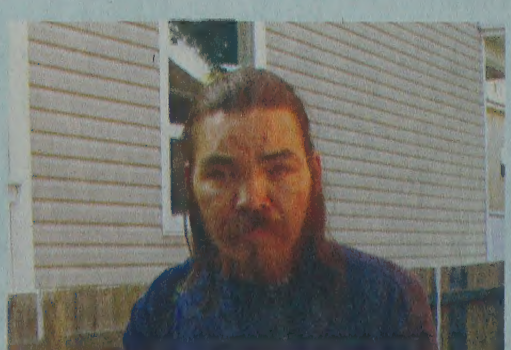


Toy dismissed from Edmonton Police Service

Sent in by Tom Engel
In regard to the dismissal of former Constable Elvin Toy from the Edmonton Police Service, Tom Engel wrote as follows:

"In reviewing this decision, I note that there are many EPS officers, current and retired, who wrote letters supporting Toy, despite the fact that the way he mistreated inner city people was absolutely notorious in the community and in the EPS. I would be very surprised if most of those who wrote letters did not know or had not heard of this. To say the least, this is disconcerting.

I remind you of the Racist Email, (see below) which was sent to Toy and other members of Toy's Squad and, of course, the No Rats T-Shirts scandal where the underlying tragedy was that two good cops who tried to do something about it, Monique Prefontaine and Jerry Hove, were bullied into quitting (the No Rats campaign worked). All of this was notorious.

Toy sent the Mr Socko email to Hove.

I also remind you of disciplinary action taken against Toy that had nothing to do with the No Rats matter.

Here is what one former officer wrote to me when he heard of Toy's dismissal:

So they finally got rid of Toy! I saw him in action in 1999 and was absolutely horrified by his actions. Too bad I was such a pussy that I never said anything.

Anyway, happy to see that your hard work finally got some justice for Toy's 100's of victims. Thank you for all the work you have done in getting rid of that guy."

Toy was with the EPS for 22 and a half years.

The defence referenced a binder of assorted documents (Exhibit 20) which included messages of support from friends, current and former work colleagues/ members, a sampling of performance reviews, a plea for leniency from Constable Toy's wife, and letters from a psychologist and psychiatrist who have treated Constable Toy. The defence contended these documents ought to be treated as though they were personally given by the authors at this hearing..

The primary purpose of these various documents was to demonstrate Constable Toy has been a valuable and effective member of the Edmonton Police Service and to show the disciplinary proceedings have already exacted a penalty upon him and have taken a toll.

30. The defence highlighted a number of the letters of support included in Exhibit 20.

The first such letter was from Acting Staff Sergeant Harder. A/Staff Sergeant Harder had been Constable Toy's supervisor in Economic Crimes Section. In the letter,

A/Staff Sergeant Harder noted that, in his supervision of Constable Toy, he had no issues with the officer and would sometimes have to push Constable Toy to submit overtime claims for his extra work.

A/Staff Sergeant Harder also advised his opinion of Constable Toy had shifted 180 degrees over the period of time he worked with him (approximately 1 % years). He also indicated Constable Toy was a valuable resource, had a solid work ethic and demonstrated respectful and professional behaviour to all. A/Staff Sergeant Harder ndicated he was aware of the circumstances concerning the present disciplinary proceedings."

33. The defence referred to the material authored by current co-workers (Melnyk and Zukiwsky) which were supportive of Constable Toy. The comments made by Peter Miller were specifically highlighted. Mr. Miller stated he has known Constable Toy for approximately 9 years and noted Constable Toy was always courteous, professional and treated others with respect. Mr. Miller advised he was aware of the general nature of Constable Toy's disciplinary convictions and they would not deter him from working with Constable Toy in the future."

Terry Briscoe

From: Scott Carter
Sent: October 21, 2002 11:03 AM
To: Dave Pelech; Dave Radmanovich
Subject: Mr. SOCKO.

Mr SOCKO'S Ten Principals of Downtown Policing. (Alternatively known as Mr SOCKO'S "Downtown Way")

1) All the best "Investigations" end in a brawl.

2) The key to a successful partnership is to have crime on one another.

3) An "Aboriginal" is actually just an Indian.

4) D58 is more than just transportation and should always be referred to as the "Mobile Native Friendship Center."

5) Operating the D58 is the most noble job in the department. Ensure all subjects you deal with in the M.N.F.C. address you as "Ambassador."

6) The Gaming and Liquor Act is the supreme document which governs us all.

7) Every arrest should be followed by a vague, yet wordy report.

8) In order to color an otherwise boring police report, repeatedly use words like "Tranny", "Whore", and "Ass-Fucked", even if they nothing to do with the investigation.

9) PCU is for stuff for you already have.

10) Tom ENGEL is SATAN.

Amazing Courage

By Sidakka

The other day I was reading one of my favorite books - *To Kill a Mockingbird.* The part that stood out for me was the part where the protagonist's father explains the meaning of courage stating that true courage is seeing through something that may be deemed impossible. I have read many stories of courage under fire and the story that strikes the biggest chord with me is Terry Fox's story. In 1980, with one leg amputated, Terry Fox attempted to run across Canada in hopes of raising roughly 24 million dollars for cancer research, the total based on each Canadian donating one dollar to the cause. After 143 days, averaging a full marathon per day, Fox was forced to end his run in Thunder Bay as the cancer had spread to his lungs. He died nine months later, but left a lasting legacy.

As a young boy Terry Fox was said to be extremely stubborn and would not give up on a project or skill until he had mastered it. As such he excelled at academics and sports. In his senior year he won the top athletic award alongside his best friend and future race supporter Doug Alward, who drove the van and cooked the meals.

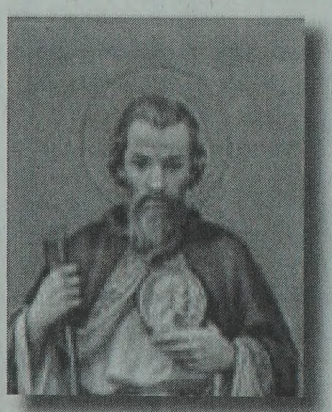
In 1980 Fox sought help after feeling a sore knee for several months following a car accident. He was diagnosed with osteogenic sarcoma that at the time did not seem to be metastatic. Once he was operated on, a removal of right leg six inches above the knee, he thought he had beaten cancer. Fox decided to start The Marathon of Hope and was inspired to do this run after reading an article on Dick Traum, the first amputee to finish the New York City Marathon, and by his experience seeing young children with cancer while he was undergoing therapy.

Fox dipped his right leg into the Atlantic Ocean near St John's, Newfoundland and filled two bottles of water. His goal was to dump one bottle into the Pacific Ocean in Port Coquitlam where he resided and intended to finish his run, as well as dip his right leg into the Pacific Ocean. The other water bottle would serve as a souvenir. Terry Fox had to hop step with his good leg as his prosthetic leg's springs had to adjust. The immense strain led to bone bruises, bleeding cysts and blisters. However, Fox continued to run and stated there was a pain threshold, which he crossed after about twenty minutes of running. While Fox received funding for shoes, socks, a vehicle and his leg, he refused any amount of money to endorse products. He kept the goal in his mind that somewhere the hurting in cancer must stop. Many doctors cautioned against the run, yet Fox continued to run promising if he had problems with his heart he would stop.

He had to endure harsh weather conditions, gales, blizzards and heavy rain, and was initially upset with the reception his run received. However as time went by, and media attention soared, his run ultimately gained a mass supporting. On July 11th, 1980 Fox, in one day alone, raised $100,000 and got to meet hockey legend Bobby Orr who pledged $25,000 alone. Fox later stated the high point of his journey was meeting Bobby Orr. After sustaining shin splints, a sore knee and sore ankle doctors urged Fox to seek treatment. Finally after feeling extensive exhaustion following a run he checked in with doctors just outside Thunder Bay and was forced to end his run after 143 days and 5,373 kilometers.

By the time Fox abandoned his run he had raised 1.7m dollars. A week after the run ended there was a telethon that raised another 10.5m and by the time a year had passed since the start of the run, 23m had been raised from this cause alone.

On June 28th 1981 Fox died from complications of pneumonia. Yet his legacy had just started. Each year following his death there has been a Terry Fox Run. Initially, it was only nationwide but it is now held in 60 countries. To this date over 600m has been raised all due to his courage. Terry Fox ultimately showed us true courage and that people should be viewed by their abilities, not their disabilities. He remains one of Canada's biggest icons to date.



Novena

Holy St. Jude – Apostle and Martyr, great in virtue, rich in miracles, faithful intercessor for all those who invoke your aid in their time of need, I humbly beg of you to whom God has given such power to come to my assistance in my present earnest petition. In return I promise to make your name known and cause you to be invoked. St. Jude, pray for us. Sacred Heart of Jesus, pray for us. Say three Our Fathers, three Hail Marys and three Glorias for six days and promise publication.
J.M.

New Year's Resolutions - Waist Reduction

By Joanne Benger

1. Design a good twenty step program.
2. Buy a vintage corset.
3. Tighten your belt.
4. Suck it in.
5. Fast for a day.
6. Wear control top panty hose.
7. Get a cinch belt.
8. Stand beside people with bigger waists.
9. Squeeze into jeans a size too small.
10. Improve your posture.
11. Soak in a sauna.
12. Buy an ab-crunch machine.
13. Join an exercise club.
14. Hire a personal trainer.
15. Consider liposuction.
16. Look into gastric by pass.
17. Throw out all above ideas.
18. Buy two gorgeous baggy tops.
19. Repeat ten times, "Big is Beautiful".
20. Reliable resolution – Celebrate "Big waist week."
21. New mantra for 2016 is "Love me, love my waist."

New Year's prayer for one and all

Dear Lord, So far this year I've done well. I haven't gossiped. I haven't lost my temper. I haven't been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish, or overindulgent. I'm very thankful for that. But in a few minutes, Lord, I'm going to get out of bed and from then on I am probably going to need a lot more help. Amen. Anonymous

Random Acts of Kindness

By Joanne Benger

1. Greet ten strangers today with a smile and "Good morning".
2. Drop some change on the street or on the floor in a public place.
3. Donate nice stuff to the thrift store.
4. Pick up garbage on the street.
5. Silently pray for every stranger you meet.
6. Let people merge into traffic.
7. Say, "I am in a no hurry" and let others go ahead of you in the queue.
8. Hold doors and say "You're welcome".
9. Take dollars off coupons you won't use and place them by the right products on the store shelf.
10. Place new once-read magazines at the laundromat.
11. Tidy up a public washroom.
12. Place your empties where the bottle picker will find them.
13. Leave your once read newspapers on a public bench.
14. Adopt a stray cat if only for one meal a day.
15. Instead of trashing it, give left over food to the birds.
16. Take a bouquet of flowers to a seniors' home or hospital and shake a dice to see which room gets these.
17. When you hear a siren or see an ambulance, pray for the people involved.
18. Give something to the Food Bank.

York Hotel site sculpture offensive to First Nations people

By Linda Dumont

When I first saw the giant orangy red hand, palm open towards the sky, on the lot where the York Hotel once stood, I thought it was a piece of debris left over from a construction site and that it would soon be removed. But it remained.

Recently, I learned that it is actually a work of art - a sculpture, an artist's conception depicting a huge open hand representing pan handling, with the colour red representating First Nations people. The artist is making a statement about the misconception/perception of First Nations people as panhandlers.

I asked Matt Auger, a First Nations pastor, what he thought about the sculpture and he said, "I find it very offensive, and extremely racist."

When I asked Don Friske, who lives in the neighbourhood, what he thought of the sculpture, he said, "Is that a acupture? I thought it was some junk left on the lot."

One redeeming quality of the scupture is that it is constructed of wood so will deteriate over a period of years if it is not removed. In the meantime, it can be used as a bench, but I have yet to see anyone actually sit on it.

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All money raised will go towards production costs for Alberta Street News and for vendor events.

Contact Linda Dumont at 780-428-0805
dumontlc@hotmail.com

Boyle Street Community Services plans to have housing open by 2018

By Linda Dumont

Boyle Street Community Services plans to have their new $60-million facility open by 2018. The downtown agency is a non-profit organization that offers support for those challenged by homelessness and poverty.

Because more than three quarters of the people, who use their services, are Aboriginal, they plan to include Aboriginal themes to help provide a place of healing.

At a news conference, executive director Julien Daly said,"We want to create a building that is reconciliation in action in that it provides services that address homelessness, mental health, addiction, family dislocation, cultural genocide, trauma, ... the consequences of the Indian residential school system, which the majority of the people who come to use our services either attended or are the children, or grandchildren or great-grandchildren of those that did attend."

The building will be built on the current site across from the new downtown arena to include four floors of rental housing for the working poor and long term homeless as well as space for an Aboriginal themed hotel. It will have 24-hour access to shelter, showers, bathrooms and laundry, as well as a pharmacy, a bank, a bike repair shop, and a drop-in centre that will serve hot meals.

Services will be moved offsite while the building is under construction.

The agency hasn't yet finalized funding for the project.

My life as a street pastor

By Peter Schultz

For the glory of God I would like to give a testimony. I believe I'm in the top 5 % most blessed people in the world. God blessed me with two Christ-like parents; not only their marriage, but also those of my brother and my sister were excellent. I was never abused by anyone. God protected me from all evil regardless of many very dangerous situations. Hundreds of times I was in the most dangerous bars in Edmonton, such as the York and the International Hotels, often after 1 a.m. I worked for minimum wage as a dish washer at the Coffee Cup Inn (97 Street and Jasper Ave), the most dangerous facility in Edmonton at that time, frequented mostly by prostitutes, pimps, drug addicts, gang members and criminals. Police came because of violence frequently. It was open only from 23:00 – 07:00 daily. I took that job after quitting a well paying, secure job I had for two years at the Edmonton Journal printing department. My friends and relatives thought I must be crazy, but it was one of the best decisions I ever made.

I enjoyed being hospitable hundreds of times and was evicted four times for keeping people overnight. I was only passing on the blessings I had enjoyed all my life, loving God above all else and my neighbour as much as myself. That is the only commandment we have to keep, because it includes all of the others.

For the next half of a year, my Christian doctor has encouraged me to cut back on helping others and to concentrate more on getting my own needs met. I appreciate your prayers about that.

The most common greeting I had used in the inner city in the last 10 years is, after showing a fist, saying: "I'm looking for a fight, are you available?" I was always glad I wasn't taken seriously.

How to help the homeless

1. Pray for them.
2. Make eye contact.
3. Smile at them.
4. Pray to God that he love the person through you.
5. Have a bag handy with the following: socks, mitts, caps, fruits, juice, bottled water, chocolate, other sweets (addicts crave sweets), toothbrush, tooth paste, and dental floss.
7. Be willing to prioritize the real from the felt needs.
8. Offer your most prized possession -your time, as well as food, fluids, shelter from the cold, bus tickets, change for phone calls (realize that most don't have cell phones so offer to make a phone call for them.)
9. Offer to buy them a coffee, meal or fellowship.
10. Offer them a ride somewhere: shopping, to visit someone, to homeless shelters; (contact 211 or 311 for addresses), church services or a movie.
11. Ask where they live.
12. Give the person a large piece of plastic in case of rain or snow. eg. a mattress cover,
13. Give out blankets, coats and other clothing.
14. Offer a place to shower or take a bath; request that to avoid bed bugs, lice etc., they take off all their clothes, put their clothes in a plastic bag. give them clean clothes, or a house coat, and give them privacy to get undressed and dressed.
15. Befriend them,
16. Ask them to do something for you (that helps their self esteem. It takes humility to accept love.)

Caution: don't take unnecessary risks by being alone with them without a chaperone.

Correction: On the photo submitted by Peter Schultz last month for his story on refugees the name Hertha Krausy was ommitted. More on his family as refugees next issue.

Photo by Linda Dumont

Hope beyond despair for 2016

By Ryan Robertson

The snow began to fly. Winter had settled in across the high county. The shelters were full and the streets stood on a forlornly desolate atmosphere. It was an unforgiving scene. It was cold and money was a rarity. Drugs and alcohol became prevalent so that many could cope.

If you were fortunate you found a warm place even though the shelters were not turning anyone away. It became a reality that nature had finally decided to become ruthless to those who were less fortunate. It was a depressing scene and it was compounded by the recent downturn in the economy.

It spared no one.. Those who before had secure positions were fearing for their jobs or had lost them already.

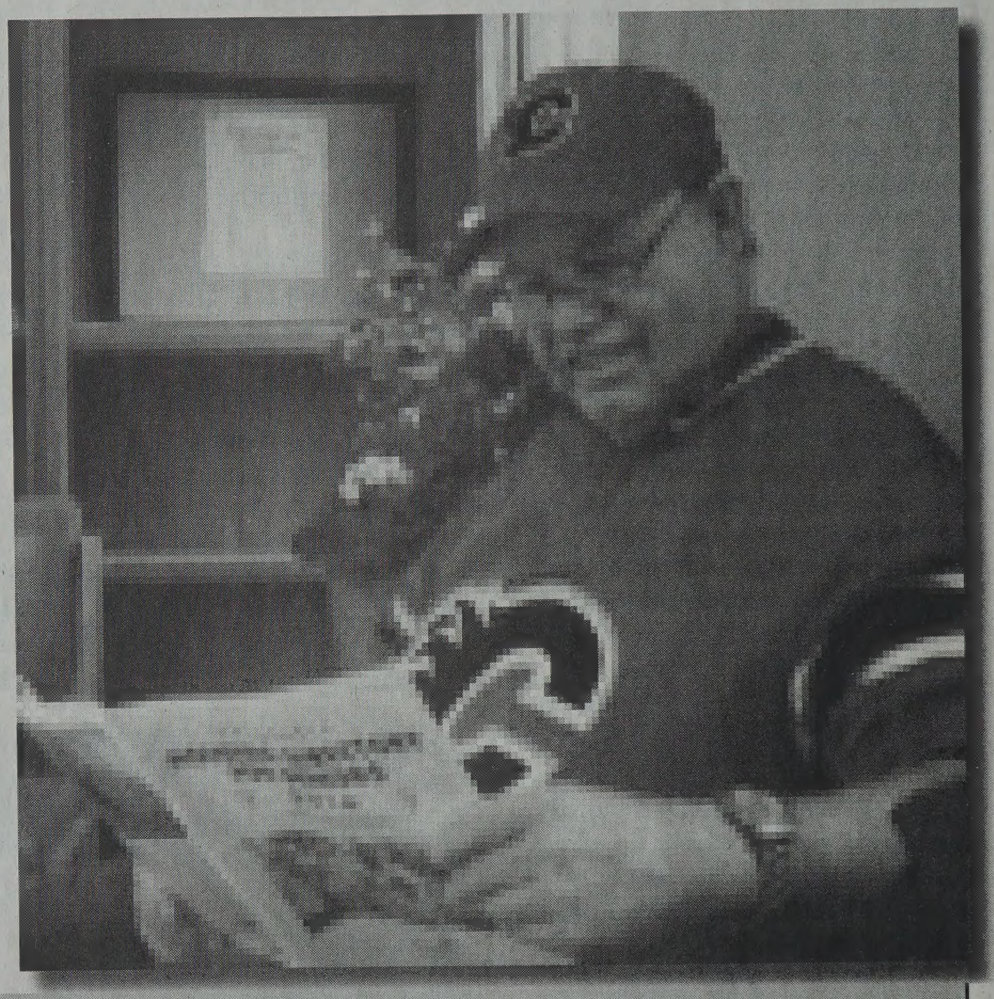
Christmas was on its way and parents of small children scrabbled to make a joyous time for them despite the fact they were heart – broken themselves. The world was changing and the need to find something positive to believe in was facing centre stage.

From all of the turmoil and hardship came the hope that things could get better,

People started to band together with the intention that despite all that was wrong in not only Alberta but elsewhere in the world that perhaps, just perhaps, at this time of hostility, it could be set aside and peace could be found.

Those who have made Alberta their home for years realize that boom or bust is a way of life. It makes us hearty and gives us a solid identity in the great country of Canada. Still, right now, our morals and values are tested, and a new year looms on the horizon. We must believe that positive things will happen in our time.

We must believe that good outweighs bad and that in 2016 the answers will be found to free us all and put us all back on course.



Mission

Edmonton Street News Society provides a voice, employment and social support to those who need these, and communicates perspectives dealing with poverty and social justice, by education and communication activities, including publishing a street newspaper

Values/Beliefs/Guiding Principles

We believe in being inclusive and encouraging
We believe that human rights are fundamental to living together
We believe that everyone deserves the opportunity to earn and control their money
We believe in journalistic and organizational professionalism and integrity
We believe the public needs to know about issues around poverty and social justice
We value community and connecting with others
We value passion and determination
We believe everyone deserves the opportunity to learn, develop and use communication skills

Turn Those Feelings Upside-Down

By Linda Roan

Feelings can make us feel happy or they can bring us down. Job losses, estrangements from family or friends, and sickness, can all leave us with the feeling of hopelessness. Feelings can be a powerful influence in a positive and negative way, but they are only feelings...feelings that come and go like the waves of the sea.

Recently I heard a famous, successful person interviewed about what it is that makes him successful. He replied with the usual reasons, hard work, never give up, discipline, etc. Then the question was asked, "What are your fears, and what do you fear the most?" The person being interviewed thought for a moment and then replied, "I'm not going to tell you my fears."

"Why not?" the interviewer asked.

"Because", he replied, "Everyone has fears, and it isn't important that you know my fears".

What an insightful reply, I thought. All of us have unreliable feelings of inadequacy, we are afraid to fail and afraid about what people think about us. No matter where we stand in life, negative feelings come and go.

On a bus, a father was holding his little boy, feeding him Cheerios one at a time from the palm of his hand. Those of us sitting close to them enjoyed seeing the contentment of the little boy. As the bus drove on however, the little boy became restless and began to look unhappy. A woman sitting closest to the father and son put her hand in her shopping bag and pulled out a banana. As she handed the banana to the little boy, he reached out his hand to take it, and then clutched it with both hands. His attention was only on that banana, and the woman who had given it to him. A faint smile came across the child's face as he looked at the woman.

Just then, the bus stopped, the doors opened, and the father and son got off the bus. I don't know how everyone else was feeling at that moment, but I had a feeling of happy contentment. Someone had taken a moment to change the feelings of a little boy, and just maybe it changed the feelings of those who witnessed that moment.

Can you believe we are beginning a new year already? May you have happy moments helping those close to you to change those pesky negative feelings into positive ones. May we all find contentment in persevering at whatever we do, and making those around us smile.

Speaking of persevering, congratulations to the Edmonton Eskimos for persevering and winning The Grey Cup, 2015. Well Done! Being at the Grey Cup celebrations and seeing the joy on the player's faces was a great event in itself.

Go, Oilers! Your city is Cheering for You!

Happy New Year!

The New Year's Tree

By Sharon Austin

As a child I always felt sorry for the Christmas tree when it was time to take it down in the New Year. I imagined that the tree that was chosen to reign at Christmas, decorated with garlands and twinkling lights and crowned with a star, would feel so sad to be discarded outside a few weeks later.

When I had children of my own, we would keep the Christmas tree up for a long time but we were still always sad to see it lying outside in the snow.

One year I decided to make the old Christmas tree into a New Year's Tree for the birds. There was no internet at that time, so we looked in bird books to find the best winter foods for the birds. We hung small bird feeders filled with sunflower seeds and bird seed on the branches and the children made a garland of popcorn and cranberries and apple slices.

Birds need a high energy diet in the winter so we put suet from the supermarket into mesh onion bags and tied these on the branches. For a special treat we mixed up a batch of Crunchy Suet Delight made from equal amounts of suet, all-natural peanut butter, and mixed seeds. Then, enough cornmeal or whole-wheat flour was added to absorb the grease from the peanut butter. I pressed this mixture into small plastic containers and refrigerated it until it was solid. These treats were also put into mesh bags and hung on the tree.

In a few days, the birds began to come to the New Year's Tree and we had the pleasure of watching the chickadees and a few beautiful red cardinals feasting at our tree. Partridges and a few wild rabbits left their tracks in the snow under the tree where we had sprinkled grain.

One day, my youngest son came running in all excited. "There's a real friendly crow on the New Year's Tree," he said. "It flaps its wings and says "caw, caw" but it doesn't fly away. I bet I could even touch it. Come, I'll show you."

Sure enough, there was a crow on one of the lower branches of the tree. As I watched, I saw the bird try to lift off but it seemed to be stuck fast to the branch. Slowly, I crept forward for a closer look and the sun glinted on something silvery caught on the branch. The poor crow was hopelessly caught in a long length of plastic filament fishing line that had fastened it securely to the branch. We live near a lake and often on my walks I pick up pieces of fishing line discarded by fishermen as I know it can be a real hazard to wildlife.

"This is a two-man job," I thought, so I went to get my husband, Don. I'm sure the bird must have thought its life was over as it saw us coming towards it with a knife and scissors. I threw a light cloth over the crow and held its wings down while Don cut the tangled fishing line from the bird's feet and legs. The crow, free at last, began to soar and swoop and dive in the sheer joy of freedom.

I think the old Christmas tree was especially happy that year to become a New Year's Tree. Not only had it provided food and shelter for some of God's beautiful birds but it had played an important part in setting a captive free.

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Reflections on being an orphan

By Maria B.

This year I would like to honour my paternal grandmother for opening the doors of her house and of her heart the day that our parents decided they did not want to be responsible for the children that they brought into the world. We ranged in age from two year old to 10 year old and my grandmother was about 62 years old.

This incredible woman worked as a Principal of our school from 8:00 to 2:00 and then she came back to the same school to work as a Librarian from 4:00 to 9:00 daily.

While the abandonment was devastating at first, we came to the realization that the violence had ceased and the fear had subsided.

On Christmas my grandmother always made sure that we had a tree; we did not have too many toys as she could not afford to buy too much but the Christmas supper that she prepared was incredible. On Christmas Day our uncle, my father's brother, used to come and pick us up and put us in the back of his truck to take us to church with our cousins. We used to look forward to that. We would go and watch the Christmas parade and I felt so happy because everyone was happy. Christmas was such a happy time, thanks to my grandmother.

And yet in our hearts there was an innate longing for our mom and dad; we never felt they were bad, but we felt that there must have been something wrong with us if our own parents were able to abandon us.

Now I understand that growing up in a good family as children, we are able to develop our God-like qualities that children are born with. In our case, we became lost and abandoned children believing that all those gifts that other kids were able to demonstrate, we were disqualified from having. Now I understand that God made a decision and even if it was devastating at first, with all his divine wisdom and love for us, He knew that if we stayed with our parents it would have been harder on us than if we lived without them. As children this was very hard to understand and accept but we were safe and loved.

The sense of loss dominated every decision, every perception and everything that we felt about ourselves; we tended to see ourselves as flawed human beings. And then in our own time we reached beyond the veil into the incredible realization of the truth. At that time we were able to reconnect with the miraculous discovery of what we came into the world to achieve and knowing that we had within us everything we needed to develop our potential

I did not realize all of this until after my grandmother died. I just couldn't see it. She tried to make me see it but I couldn't. I just wanted to look at the world through the eyes of a hurt child.

Now I know that I am what I am because of my grandmother, who opened her home and her heart to five children and made a commitment to keep us safe and loved. When you focus in life on missing something that was not meant to be in your life, like our parents, all the miracles keep passing by and being ignored. To be able to recognize and open our hearts with gratefulness for this incredible grandmother is the very foundation of who we are.

My grandmother modeled for us an incredible commitment and love, compassion, and incredible work ethic. Her sole request was that we grow up learning and accepting our own worth. One thing that we have been able to define clearly in our lives is that God ensured we were being protected.

We are God's creations and a gift to the world. And recognizing this is honouring my grandmother.

HAVE A HAPPY NEW YEAR

Rob's Corner in Calgary

By Robert Champion

It's Been a Good Year

It's been a pretty good 2015. Got into a new apartment, a one bedroom, cute and cozy, as of November 1st. Had some good friends, Toby and Larry, to help me move. They both had trucks. It was my first move in 34 years. A new beginning for me. first time in over 35 years that I have been on my own since my common-law wife passed away back in August 24th 2012. Met and made some new friends, kept in touch with some old ones. Enjoyed selling and writing for Alberta Street News.

What's on my mind?

Well, the Calgary Flames seem to have found their way. They seem to have been on a winning streak lately. I'm a big fan virtually since they came up from Atlanta, Georgia back in around 1980. Even though the Stamps didn't take the Grey Cup this year, I'm glad to see that the Grey Cup is still in Alberta.

Weather wise it's been a pretty good winter so far. Virtually no snow and mild temperatures. Hopeful for a mild winter. My bike is my main transportation. Pretty well ride my bicycle every day throughout the year. Keeps me in shape and is good exercise.

Hope you all had a good Christmas and hopefully you all have a good 2016. Would like to see more affordable housing, much, much more! Hopefully this new Liberal government will be a better one than the one we had for ten years in terms of being honest and transparent.

Rob's Say of the Day

Another birthday coming up soon, turning 65 in January. Hopefully I'll still be around for another 20 to 25 years. Don't do anything special, really, just get together with friends at one or two of my favourite pubs. Prefer to go out for some pints, hang out and chill with friends. If I stayed home by myself I'm too outgoing for that!

Post Christmas Commentary - Christmas or Xmas?

HEALING WORDS

BY THE CMHA WRITING FOR RECOVERY GROUP

Lanky is a member of the CMHA Writing for Recovery group.

By Lanky

I don't know about you, but when I was a kid my parents always told me, "Never lie. I can tell when you're lying."

As far as I can remember I never lied. In fact, when I did tell the truth I was labeled "Instigator, tattletale and trouble maker." That was for telling the truth, usually accompanied by a scolding or a beating.

One day, shortly before Christmas or Xmas as I like to call it, my seven year old friend Ted (I was five), told me "There is no Santa."

Upset, I went straight home and asked Dad if he was a liar just like me, upon which I got a slap. But, crying, I added, "Ted next door says there is no Santa."

"Son," Dad said, "You're a big boy now. Santa is for little kids. Make sure you don't tell your younger brothers and sister – you will spoil it for them."

Was I confused! "Don't lie." "Lie."

Permission to lie, Son. Basically as long as you don't lie to me. A platform to learn about deception. What gives parents permission to lie to their children for the first five years of their lives? I remember the thrill and adrenaline about the lies I told about Santa to easily deceived young ones. What a rush. It was good training for future lying and deception.

Santa doesn't come down chimneys or come to Jesus' birthday, if in fact it is his birthday, anyway. Why not celebrate Winter Solstice and stop connecting the true issues with Santa the lie? I don't think Jesus would approve of lying to children for the first five or six years of their lives, being a man of truth.

"His will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

And that lies, kingdom come.

We all, or most of us, anyway, have fond memories of Xmas, including myself. But that all ended at five years old with a slap in the face. All for asking my dad if he was a liar like me. So how about Winter Solstice Celebration.

Why don't we call it Ex-mas?
What misery for some.

Fighting for my right to sell Alberta Street News in St. Albert Part 2-continued from ASN Dec. 15, 2015

Story by John Zapantis
Photo by Theresa Walsh Cooke

It never ever dawned on me that one day I'd have the capacity to influence St. Albert Mayor Nolan Crouse to introduce what I had referred to as the All-Inclusive Vendor's Bylaw that would not only allow me the right to bring our paper into town to set up shop, but would make it inclusive for various other vendors to sell their various products in the City of St. Albert. I made my presentation to influence change on July 3, 2012 on St. Albert Council Minutes that was aired live on Shaw Cable TV, where I delivered my presentation to the Mayor and members of St. Albert City Council in the council chambers at St. Albert Place in St. Albert. The end result of my idea to introduce an All- Inclusive Vendor's Bylaw allowing all vendors to vend in the City of St. Albert was that it evolved into a mobile vendors' test pilot project that was to be held between May 1st to October 31st 2015. That test pilot project was later introduced 2 years and 6 months after I had proposed the All-Inclusive Vendors' Bylaw that had influenced the Mayor to conduct this six month test pilot project primarily designed for mobile sandwich truck vendors, but excluded other vendors like myself from participating in this test pilot project.

When I read an article appearing in the St. Albert Gazette dated Wednesday March 25, 2015 by Viola Pruss, headlined 'Trucks can now park in the city, compete over spaces', I noticed there was no other mention of other types of vendors, like myself, who were not given any inherent rights to be a part of that process. So I appeared on Council Minutes aired on Shaw Cable TV for the second time on October 26, 2015, popping the question to Mayor Nolan Crouse and City Council, about why our provincial street newspaper, Alberta Street News, wasn't included in that test pilot project.

Here's a continuation of that story that appeared in the Alberta Street News December 2015 issue, where we continue on with St. Albert City Councillor Tim Osborne speaking on behalf of our newspaper while trying to get Guy Boston, Executive Director Economic Development to clarify where all vendors would stand on the guidelines implemented for vending on private and public lands in St. Albert as this transcript continues.

Councillor Tim Osborne, "Thank you. I'm sure if the question would be maybe for Mr. Boston. I think the mobile information came forwards from our department. I know that when we were first talking about this, we had talked about the possibility, whether this would include newspaper vendors and others and ultimately what came forwards was specific to food trucks. So I'm just wondering, maybe you could provide us with an update, kind of next steps."

Guy Boston Executive Director Economic Development said, "Mr. Mayor to Councillor Osborne, Uh, correct, I mean our vision was to initially, that it was going to be all vendors and then in the end, we did offer to take a test of the food vendors. That pilot is wrapping up in the end of October. As per that particular pilot that was brought forwards to council, we indicated that we'd be coming back with the results of that pilot in cue of next year and recommendations for moving forwards on the full spectrum of vendors. So this vendor situation would be in consideration of the report that would be coming forward and how we'd move forwards with that."

Councillor Tim Osborne, "Thank you for that. I'm just wanting to make sure that I'm understanding correctly, our current legislation as well. So my understanding is that uh, while we can't do business licensing on public property at this point beyond the pilot, an individual vendor can seek out to sell their goods on private property. St. Albert Mall would be an example, I guess, if they had an agreement with that land owner. Is that correct?"

Guy Boston, "That's correct. I'm not sure about that specific example, but something like the flags that was brought up by the gentlemen, I mean those are the type of things that is in permission with private land owners. It does need to meet the land use bylaws associated with, uh, you know, usage of lands in St. Albert. I believe that there are some applications that are associated with that, but ultimately, it is up to the private land owner to give permission."

Councillor Tim Osborne, "Thank you."

Mayor Nolan Crouse, "Councillor Mackay go ahead."

Councillor Mackay, "Thank you. Through administration, are there other communities that have this type of permitting for street vending? I guess."

Guy Boston, "There probably is. I can't quote them right now and I'd have to refer back to staff to answer that question."
Councillor Cam Mackay, "Okay, we'll ask Mr. Zapantis. He might know and the question is, what other communities in Edmonton area permit mobile vending?"

Alberta Street News Media Relations Coordinator John Zapantis, "Calgary, and not mobile vending here, we're talking newspaper vendors here, because I have nothing to do with mobile vendors. I suggested this as the All-Inclusive Vendors' Bylaw and your Honourable Mayor ran with my idea. He took my idea and ran with it and left us out of the picture. So I can't necessarily speak on behalf of the mobile vendors. I'd have to speak on behalf of our newspaper, our vendors that sell on the various street corners of Calgary and Edmonton."

Councillor Mackay, Okay, so newspaper vending, uh, does that occur in Edmonton region like in Morinville, or St. Albert?"

John Zapantis, "It was in Morinville for a year and a half, but for me at that time, it was a travel issue. I couldn't go ten miles out of my way, back and forth with my vehicle. I was the only one who had access to accessible transportation and then it became an eyesore later, cause uh, not because of the sales. The sales weren't diminishing in anyway. The clients were

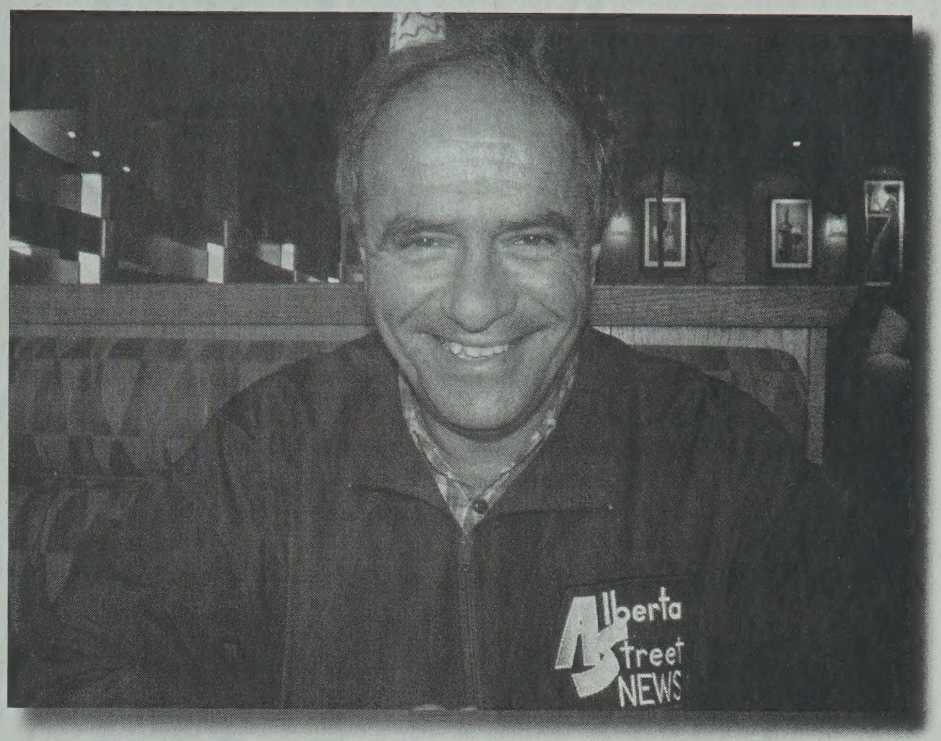
good, but the distance involved was an issue. I had emphasized that in a recent article, while writing about it. We put vendor boxes out there and they were donated by the Journal. We took it to another level. That was all of my idea, as the Media Relations Coordinator. My priority is to organize media events, write letters to organizations to give us resources, such as the Edmonton Journal, who gave us vendor boxes.

"Then we had them re-decorated by the N.A.I.T students as part of their practicum and then we had them delivered out by the Italian Bakery. Everything was done, donated and I emphasized and acknowledged them wholeheartedly for their kind efforts in making this all possible. So we had the vendor boxes out there for six months, but the mechanisms broke down and their operations manager told me he couldn't come out there to repair them. So we had to scrap the boxes. So we're currently in Calgary and Edmonton with 27 vendors strong at a circulation of 2,500 papers, split between those two cities and we are profitable.

"We have self-sufficient vendors that co-depend on our paper to supplement their marginalized incomes, while selling it for donations. They get free papers, when they start, they get free badges. I hosted the Alberta Street News Vendor Recruitment Days, which I did in Red Deer, but that didn't go so well, afterwards because the vendors didn't re-appear and wouldn't fill out money orders. It was a rather complicated process and I wanted them to send us money orders, so they could get more papers to buy, but at that time, I had given them free papers as an incentive to encourage them to be a part of the process and free badges. Now in Calgary, they're still going strong and in Edmonton, they're still doing the same thing, writing about their relevant social issues, homelessness, poverty, unemployment, anything that impacts their personal lives. They write about these things. So we are very successful, when it comes to that dependency on a ratio."

Mayor Nolan Crouse, "Thank you sir. Thank you very much."

John Zapantis, "So, are there any further questions regarding our incentive to grow in the City of St. Albert? because I certainly wouldn't mind a permit to sell on the corner of St. Anne Street, while promoting the issues and continually covering the issues as a writer."



Mayor Nolan Crouse, "Yeah. Thank you. Okay we have no more questions on the matter at this point, moving onto the operating budget, since we have no committee business, Mr. Draper. So Mr. Zapantis, just as we get ready for the next agenda, some council members may take this up a little bit later, but at this point not tonight, okay."

John Zapantis (His microphone is now shuts off as you can hear his voice faintly in the background responding to Mayor Crouse, "I'm running a story on this."

Mayor Crouse, "Thank you sir. You're a committed man and you should be commended for that. Thank you very much for serving others the way you do. I'm serious about that."

Despite the compliment on a job well done, the Mayor, during that live telecast had also assured me that I'd be given my permit to sell in the City of St. Albert, but needed more time to get back to me on his promise. This segment of Council Minutes was televised on Shaw Cable Television, but his promise to me as I reviewed the recorded version of that telecast was edited out. I do recall though that I spoke for more tham five minutes, the maximum requirement for all presentations. That's probably why his promise was edited out to make more room for relevant content.

To view recorded video version of Alberta Street News Media Relations Coordinator John Zapantis giving his street vendor's presentation to St. Albert Mayor Nolan Crouse and members of St. Albert City Council, 1) Go to Google and type in Google title bar, St. Albert Council Minutes and Agendas. 2) On top of the list, you'll notice Agendas, Minutes, & Video Archives/City of St. Albert. 3) Click this title which now takes you to Agendas Minutes & Video Archive. 4) Then scroll down to what says,-The Archive-5) Below the Archive is a search date range, where you can erase the current date showing in that box. 6) Then type in that box 2015/10/26. That's The date John Zapantis gave his Alberta Street News vendor presentation to St. Albert City Council. 7) Below that date reads an October Calendar. 8) Then click search by date range. 9) Now go to the very bottom of this page, where it reads 2015/10/26 city council and click far right video symbolism to see John Zapantis giving his presentation. 10) A video screen on the top left side will appear with St. Albert Mayor Nolan Crouse and City Council. 11) Where it says, Begin Video-Look down below that until you notice 3.0 Presentation, Delegations and Public Appointments. 12)Click this title and it will activate this video of that presentation.

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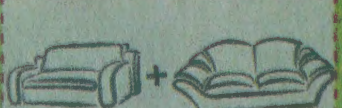

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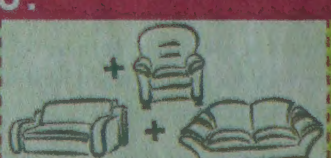

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